

Marketing 101

Producing a Newsletter

Newsletters are an inexpensive and effective way to share information with our customers. Through a regular newsletter you can keep local producers and natural resource stakeholders informed on important conservation activities and program information.

Getting started

You need to put some serious thought into your newsletter before sitting down to write the first article. Making a solid plan will ensure that the newsletter will help; you reach your goals. Here's some items and questions to consider.

Identify your purpose

To have a successful newsletter, you need a goal. Why do you want to develop a newsletter? Talk to colleagues and potential readers about topics they'd like to see covered in the newsletter.

Choose a name

Make it catchy and informative. You want the name to simply capture the newsletter's intention or contents and be memorable.

Choose a format

Will the newsletter be printed and mailed, emailed, or posted on your website? How many pages will it be?

Set a distribution schedule

How often will the newsletter be distributed? Weekly? Biweekly? Monthly? Quarterly? Consider how much time will be required to produce each issue?

Set a production schedule

This includes setting a timeline that corresponds to the distribution schedule, and making assignments. Who will write/choose the articles? Who will edit the articles and the newsletter? Who will prepare and format the newsletter?

Develop a design

Many decisions need to be made in the design area and how you want the newsletter to look. Some will be made right away, others will be made as you go along and try some different things.

Do you have a design in mind? Can you design it yourself or do you need to hire a professional designer to give it a fresh look? How many pages will it be? Will the newsletter be one, two or three columns? Will it be black and white, two color, or four color?

Consider space requirements

Will your design include text only, or allow for photos, charts, and other images? If you include photos or images, remember that you won't have as much room for text, but they attract readers' attention. A safe rule is to plan for 3 to 6 items per page.

Choosing/writing articles

- Vary articles' content to include different writing styles and various topics. Some newsletter authors suggest including useful articles, fun articles, and recognition/success stories.
- Keep articles brief and language simple.
- Run articles that will be current for a month (or however long it takes to produce the newsletter).
- Include conservation tips, your website information (if you have one), a calendar of special events, how-to's, and success stories.
- Provide a list of related conservation website addresses where readers can find more information.
- Use a title for every article, and a caption for every photo/image.
- Create a paragraph to include at the bottom of every issue that explains your organization's mission.
- Double-check your spelling and grammar.

Develop a mailing list

Whether sending through the U.S. mail or email, take the time to develop a thorough list. Keep it up to date and work to expand it. The more people who see your newsletter, the more conservation you'll help get on the ground.

Sources

<http://www.writingthatsells.com>

<http://www.mlmknowhow.com/articles/marketing/newsletterwrite.htm>

<http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/fcn/table.htm>

Print enough copies

You'll need to know how many copies of the newsletter you need before you receive printing estimates. Make sure to print enough copies to send to everyone on your mailing list, to share with partners, appropriate personnel within your organization, and extras to have available in your office.

Proof read, proof read, and proof read

Before sending your newsletter off to print or posting on the web, make sure to run spell check and grammar check. Print out a hard copy for a final proofreading. It's always a good idea to have another person give it one last read before sending it to print. Typos and poor grammar turn readers off. You want to make sure your newsletter is professional.

Printing

It's a good idea to shop around or get quotes from various printers, to ensure you get the deal that best fits your needs and budget.

Will you print copies in the office? Do local printers print newsletters? Do any of the printers mail or deliver newsletter copies? Will the local newspaper print the newsletter?

Budget

Consider costs for printing, mailing, and special materials, if needed. Do the costs fit within your budget? If printing costs are too steep, consider downsizing the newsletter (number of pages), printing in just black and white, posting the newsletter on the web, or emailing them to customers.

Be creative and have fun

Your newsletter can be an entertaining, enjoyable and informative way to communicate important conservation information to your customers.